

When Newark Was Younger

TO the waterways of Newark we may attribute the early development of the industry of "our town on the Passaic."

The young people of today may wonder where are these waterways which have contributed so much to Newark's prosperity. The answer lies in two little books by the late Edward B. Rankin, called "The Running Brooks" and "Indian Trails and City Streets." Both volumes are now out of print, and the Newarker who finds one on a second-hand book table is lucky.

Mr. Rankin was a "career-man" in the best sense. For many years he was engineer in charge of the Bureau of Sewers in Newark. His first-hand acquaintance with Newark streets and what lay beneath them contributed much to his hobby of local history.

Some 20 years ago the Public Library was allowed to copy a map drawn by Mr. Rankin which showed Newark's early lakes and streams, as Mr. Rankin had recreated them on paper from old maps and deeds, from old Newark minute books, and from his knowledge of the sewers into which the brooks were channeled.

Studying this map, one locates immediately the lake in Branch Brook Park, and Weequahic Lake, both developed by the Essex County Park Commission from streams and swamps that occupied the land from Indian days. But one will be surprised at the large pond which Mr. Rankin drew on Orange street above High. This was Boyden's Mill Pond, on land owned by Seth Boyden; its outlet flowed into the Passaic near the Mill Brook.

THE big body of water known as Silver Lake, near where the City Subway now runs under Heller Parkway would be nearly forgotten, if it were not for the trouble

*City's Early Ponds and Brooks,
Erased by Reclamation Work,
Appear in Old Maps and Deeds*

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The Erie trail and dense growth of hemlock trees are shown in this old photo of Tiffany Pond in Second River near Forest Hill station.

the Newark Housing Authority has had, in recent years with the sinking of Stephen Crane Village. From geologic reports and maps, and Mr. Rankin's writings it seems that the old Meadow Brook which ran north from the Boiling Spring around North 13th street, is responsible. This brook which flowed into the stream called "Tantecaw" by the Indians, Second River by the men of Newark, was dammed to create Silver Lake, or Sun Fish Pond, a millpond first, then an ice pond, till a sudden Summer storm washed the dam away in 1890.

Years later the Meadow Brook, then hardly more than a ditch, was turned into the Meadow Brook sewer, now under the jurisdiction of the Union Outlet Sewer. All this is to be learned from the concise reports of Newark's Division of Sewers. Stephen Crane Village was built on what must have been a little flood plain along the Meadow Brook.

Second River was for many years a much larger and more handsome stream than it is today. A favorite resort for picnics in our parents' day, it was from the beginning a source of considerable water-power and near its banks were located Jerolemon's ship yards, Hendrick's copper rolling mills, and Bennett's cotton mill.

In the meadows near the far southern boundary of Newark, Bound Creek also survives, a mere shadow of its former self. A dock where stores were landed was up this creek, and, on Two Mile Creek, its tributary, stood Johnson's mill, the second grist mill to be established in Newark, authorized in 1680.

BUT it was the Mill Brook, or First River, where Robert Treat built the grist mill in 1671, that was the birthplace of Newark's industry. For a few years after the planters from the several towns in Connecticut laid out their

(Continued on Following Page)



When mother was young she could go fishing on one of the peaceful streams in and around Old Newark. This scene appeared in an early exhibition catalogue of the Newark Camera Club and was appropriately called "Waiting for a Bite."

WHEN NEWARK WAS YOUNGER



These two little dwellings, still standing at High and Clay streets, faced the bridge over Mill Brook when they were built about a hundred years ago. Stumps for foundations of the buildings probably came from nearby quarries.

(Cont. from Preceding Page)
farms on the Passaic banks, grist was ground in small hand mills, or pounded with pestle and mortar in the Indian manner. In 1670 Robert Treat and Sergeant Richard Harrison were authorized to secure mill stones anywhere "in the town's utmost limits and bounds" and to build a mill.

We do not know what sort of stones were used for grinding, except that they were probably the hardest available in the neighborhood, sandstone with particles of flint or quartz. Outcroppings of the brownstone which we see today at Eagle Rock were conspicuous in the section lying on both sides of the present Bloomfield avenue. It is possible that this stone, so near at hand, was used. Certainly the stone from the quarries developed in this neighborhood was used to build the stone dock where the Mill Brook entered the Passaic under the present Clay Street Bridge on "the Broad street" and later another bridge near the north end of the present High street, then called "Quarry Road."

At the stone dock the blocks of sandstone from the

quarries were shipped, after commercial quarrying began in 1721. Quarrying was one of Newark's first industries, and the grist mill, the bridge and the dock made the mouth of the Mill Brook a natural trading center. About 1863 part of the Mill Brook was covered over, being eventually diverted into a sewer which entered the Passaic at Clay street. In the 1920s this was turned into the Trunk Sewer which was built to eliminate pollution in the Passaic.

THE Branch Brook, which the Park Commission made into the lovely lagoon so popular for boating and skating today flowed north and east into the Mill Brook. A narrow stream during most of the year, it rose in a swamp north of the present Bloomfield avenue, called "the Blue Jays" which was a favorite haunt for the boys in Roseville and Woodside.

Mention was made in an earlier story of the Frog Pond and the Watering Place, shown in a model constructed by the Newark Museum. We think of the Puritans who settled Newark as a very prosaic and unimaginative people, naming their streams



This ancient waterwheel furnished the motive power of mill which stood on banks of Second River in the Soho section of Belleville. Soho River is the Soho section of Belleville. Soho was named by Josiah Hornblower for the section of Birmingham, England, from which he came.

Bound Creek (for the boundary). First and Second rivers, and their hills First, Second and Third Mountains, but in naming the Frog Pond, their imaginations turned toward their New England homes for in old maps of Milford there is a Frog lane, and there is a Frog Pond in Boston to this day.

This little swamp at the Four Corners was the origin of one of Newark's greatest industries, for here, in 1698, was established the tan yard of Azariah Crane which made possible the development of Newark's important craft of shoe making.

The boggy ground made it easy to sink near the stream the rude oblong boxes—or bogs—heads which served as vats. An open shed with beams for drying hides was constructed near by. Lime vats were built above ground, and a mill was constructed in which wooden and stone wheels revolving in a large circular trough crushed the oak bark used in tanning. The quantity of oak growing on Newark's bluffs made the tannery business a flourishing industry. Later as the city grew, and there was objection to the odors from a tannery, the business moved to West Bloomfield, now Montclair, and other settlements on the mountain.

NOT only were shoes made of the hides tanned here, but cowhide, and the skins of other animals like wolves, bears, and deer, were prepared for use in clothing. Notices of runaway apprentices in East Jersey, appearing in the first newspapers in the 18th Century, frequently described them as wearing coats, vests or britches of leather. Since clothing was hard to come by, and leather badly needed for this and many other purposes, there were penalties for wasting or destroying any animal skins that could possibly be put to use. Sealers of leather were appointed to see that the skins were slowly and properly tanned so that strength and long wear would result, and no tanned skins could be sold that did not bear the town's seal.

NEWARK SUNDAY NEWS

Though I have seen no records of how many cattle the Newark settlers had, or how many hides were produced, a reading of the old minutes of the town in the 1800s indicates that the townsmen must have had many cattle and pigs. There are continual references to the animals, to the fences that were built and constantly inspected to keep them from escaping to the meadows, to the pound near the meeting house for strays, to the pastures on the mountain where the dry cattle were herded.

Probably the planters brought a few cows from Connecticut, possibly they bought more from the Dutch settlers in Manhattan Island who were successful breeders and sellers of cattle. Certainly Newark, well watered with many sparkling streams, was an ideal spot for cattle raising to flourish. This fact, and the fine transportation by water, with the waterfalls on Mill Brook and Second River had much to do with the choice of the site by Robert Treat and those who accompanied him on a preliminary trip of inspection.

THE old minute books are filled with references to the streams in the Neck as well, we, who know only the filled in land along the skyways can hardly picture the meadows as they were then. Mr. Rankin's map shows the river bank as very irregular with several points and uplands extending out into the marshy river. Through these promontories numerous streams took their lazy course.

Into Bound Creek flowed Two Mile Creek and Wheeler's Creek, the latter carrying off the waters from the Watering Place and the Frog Pond. Dead Creek, and Pierson's Creek meandered for several miles through the swamps. Gradually the marshes extending out into the bay were reclaimed, first by ditching by the early settlers, then by filling. Thus nearly all of Newark's early waterways have disappeared, to be found only in old books and maps, and in vague recollections of the older inhabitants.



On the south shore of Second River, opposite Soho, was Bird's Woods, a picnic ground famous not so long ago for Sunday School outings. People still talk about those happy days when stoges carried city folk to this secluded spot.

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